

## Explanation

This assignment will be used in my PHI 125 Ethics course. In that course we study several different ethical theories, with an eye toward gaining an understanding of what, in general, each theory says about the nature of the following sorts of questions:

- What is a good life?
- What is a good person?
- What is a right action?
- Can bad persons do right actions? Can good persons do wrong actions?
- What is kind of thing is happiness? Subjective? Objective?
- What, if anything, does happiness have to do with right action? With being a good person?

After studying these theories, we then examine several topics/issues in ethics, trying to see how the different theories we've studied would analyze those issues.

Sustainability will be one of those issues. This paper assignment will require the students to discuss and analyze *The Story of Stuff* by Annie Leonard from the perspective of one of the theories we've studied. I won't be using this assignment this semester, but do plan to use it next semester.

The assignment will cover the following learning outcomes:

- Demonstrate the ability to read and understand ethical arguments
- Demonstrate the ability to clearly express an understanding of ethical theories
- Write critical analyses of ethical topics
- Identify the key thinkers who formulated ethical theories

**Paper Topic:** Sustainability and Ethical theory.

**Assignment:** Five-page paper on *The Story of Stuff* by Annie Leonard.

**Instructions:** Write an analysis and discussion of *The Story of Stuff*. Your analysis must have three parts, as follows:

**Part 1:** In one page, summarize Leonard's main message to her viewers. What moral claim is she making with regard to our consumption driven Linear Materials Economy? Use direct quotations from her piece as appropriate to support your summary.

**Part 2:** In two pages, use **one** of the theories we've studied to analyze the moral claims Leonard is making. Be sure to cover the following:

- a. The basic idea of the moral theory you are using to analyze Leonard's claims.
- b. How exactly the theory in question would go about assessing the moral claims Leonard makes.
- c. Does the theory in question agree with Leonard's moral claim? That is, would this theory say she is correct? Incorrect? Some of both? Be sure to explain *why* the theory would say this.

Be sure to include citations from the appropriate text when explaining and applying the theory.

**Part 3:** In two pages, discuss your own consumption behavior. Discuss a situation where your consumption has been driven by planned obsolescence or perceived obsolescence (or one of each). How have you changed, or how do you plan to change, your behavior regarding consumption?

Explain *why* you plan to change in that way. What's *good/right* about doing so? Why is it good? Here you may use your understanding of *any* of the theories we've studied to inform your discussion, but you must use some. Be sure to include citations from the appropriate texts when doing so.

**Assessment:** You will be graded as follows:

**Part 1: 20 points**—Gives a clear summary of Leonard's moral claim(s) with supporting quotations from the film.

**Part 2: 40 points**—Gives a clear explanation of the moral theory, correctly uses that theory to assess the claims Leonard makes, correctly discusses whether that theory would agree with Leonard, and why. Cites text appropriately to support discussion.

**Part 3: 40 points**—Gives a clear, candid discussion of your own consumption. Provides a clear answer as to how you will change your consumption, with a clear rationale as to *why* changing in that manner is good/right, supported by references to theories we've studied.

**Submitting Your Paper:** E-mail your completed paper to me at [christj3@morainevalley.edu](mailto:christj3@morainevalley.edu) as an attached Microsoft Word document. Alternatively, you can save your paper on the Sky Drive and e-mail me the link whereby I can access it.